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Governor



KARYN POLITO
Lt. Governor

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**Baker-Polito Administration Highlights Impact of Investments in 'Last Mile'
Broadband Connectivity**

*In Small Business Month, Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito Visit West Stockbridge Small
Businesses Benefitting from Broadband Upgrades*

WEST STOCKBRIDGE – As part of Small Business Month, Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito today joined Berkshire County leaders to tour downtown small businesses that are benefitting from upgrades made by Charter Communications and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's (MBI) Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program. West Stockbridge, Hinsdale, and Lanesbrough did not have access to any broadband services until receiving a 2016 grant through the Last Mile program. The program and investments in broadband infrastructure for towns unserved by high-speed internet are improving channels for businesses to connect with customers and providing digital and educational tools to residents and students.

"Delivering high speed internet to our unserved towns is critical to the development of our local economies and is an important tool for all residents and communities, and we are pleased to tour West Stockbridge today to witness the Last Mile program's progress," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "The Berkshires draw visitors from around the world, and these network upgrades will allow small businesses to better attract and engage with new customers to grow and succeed in the 21st century economy."

"As part of Small Business Month, we are focused on making improvements that help employers succeed, and broadband is an important part of their ability to thrive," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito,** who also co-chairs the Massachusetts STEM Advisory Council. "We will continue our efforts to get broadband into more businesses, schools and

homes, allowing residents to gain access to the skills and tools they need in the digital economy to compete.”

The [Commonwealth’s \\$1.6 million Last Mile grant to Charter](#) in August 2016 supported the upgrade of the company’s TV-only cable network to an all-digital network, to deliver digital television and broadband to existing households and businesses in West Stockbridge, Hinsdale and Lanesbrough. The grant also funded Charter’s ongoing expansion of this network to 100% of the residences in each town, an estimated 440 additional households which were previously unserved by broadband or cable television.

"Charter Communications is pleased to be working with Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and town officials to extend our state-of-the-art, fiber-rich network throughout the towns of West Stockbridge, Hinsdale and Lanesborough," **said Catherine Bohigian, Executive Vice President of Government Affairs, Charter Communications.** "Charter's expansion is well under way and will provide high-speed internet access to thousands of homes and businesses when finished - including 750 in West Stockbridge alone - helping address our shared goal of bringing high-speed broadband to unserved areas of the Commonwealth."

The Governor and Lt. Governor were joined on the tour by Sen. Adam G. Hinds and State Rep. Smitty Pignatelli (D-Lenox), Deputy Secretary Carolyn Kirk from the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development, executives from Charter, and leaders of MBI.

"Few issues are as critical for the region than universal broadband -- western Mass. depends on progress," **said State Sen. Adam G. Hinds (D-Pittsfield).** "I appreciate the efforts and leadership of the Baker-Polito Administration that have brought us advances in many small towns, and look forward to continuing our partnership to ensure Last Mile solutions are deployed across all 52 communities in my district."

"Broadband connectivity allows businesses to reach customers, entrepreneurs to understand their market and competition, and workers access to skills and training they need for successful careers," **said Deputy Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Carolyn Kirk.** "During small business month it is important to remember that this technology keeps small firms competitive, but it is also important for families who have invested in houses in unserved communities, and for children who want to do online research for school."

"This was a great opportunity for the Governor and Lt. Governor to hear from satisfied small business owners that are benefitting from the connections they have received over the past year," **said Peter Larkin, Chair of the Board of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.** "This would not be possible without the partnership of Charter and their commitment to completing this project. Our agreement will get residents in West Stockbridge and the two other towns connected faster than we thought possible, and at a savings to both the towns and the Commonwealth."

The tour was led by Joe Roy Jr., a member of the West Stockbridge Business Association and the owner of [The Floor Store](#), a family-run floor covering and installation business that was the first stop of the tour. The store handles more than 90% of its transactions over the internet.

“Each of the 36 client contracts we currently have open was negotiated online,” said **Joe Roy Jr.** “The new high-speed connection allows us to process those contracts more quickly and to send large files more dependably. It has also made it possible for folks to get television and telephone service over the internet and allowed second home owners to work remotely more reliably, allowing them to stay longer in West Stockbridge.”

The tour made five additional stops at small businesses in West Stockbridge, including:

- [The Shaker Mill Inn](#), a small Berkshires bed & breakfast that handles bookings and markets the property to potential visitors online;
- The [Shaker Mill Tavern Family Smoke House](#), where a new internet-dependent point-of-sale system has improved the efficiency of the restaurant;
- [No. Six Depot](#), a local coffee roaster and cafe where employees spoke about the importance of selling the Depot’s products online and offering WiFi to customers; and
- [Stone House Properties LLC](#), a real estate agency which noted the importance of broadband connections to potential homebuyers looking to relocate to the Berkshires.

In May 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration introduced a new [Last Mile leadership team](#) and a [new framework to accelerate implementation of broadband projects](#) in unserved or underserved communities through a more flexible, community-based approach. Over the past year, the MBI and Baker-Polito Administration have helped 41 towns move projects forward, through partnerships with private providers, Last Mile grants to towns or considerations of options to bring broadband access to their community.

Earlier this month, the Administration announced [\\$4.6 million in grants to support municipal broadband projects](#) across Western Massachusetts. Over the past year, the MBI announced a grant to expand coverage to [nine partially served towns](#); supported town-run projects in [Alford](#), [Otis](#), [Warwick](#), and [Mount Washington](#); and is assisting numerous towns in the evaluation of public-private partnership proposals resulting from an [RFP issued late last year](#).

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